

To: Benenati, Frank[benenati.frank@epa.gov]
From: Enck, Judith
Sent: Fri 8/5/2016 1:37:55 AM
Subject: Hoosick falls

See first two articles esp the end of the second article

POLITICO: Cuomo says state has no plans to conduct blood testing in Newburgh

By Scott Waldman

08/03/16 03:51 PM EDT

ALBANY — Gov. Andrew Cuomo said Wednesday the state has no plans to conduct blood tests on residents in the city of Newburgh, where thousands may have been exposed to a toxic chemical linked to cancer, unless "the facts justify it."

Newburgh's municipal water supply has tested at twice the Environmental Protection Agency's recommended safety level of PFOS, or perfluorooctanesulfonic acid.

Story Continued Below

Last month, Newburgh city manager Michael Ciaravino wrote to the state Department of Health, requesting that residents be tested, and volunteered to offer testing sites. In his letter, Ciaravino cited state blood testing in Hoosick Falls and questioned why Newburgh has not received the same treatment.

On Wednesday, Cuomo said he had not heard Newburgh wanted the testing.

"I haven't heard that they were asking for it," the governor said. "You need to know the facts. Do the facts justify the testing and that would be the question. If the facts justify it, I'm sure we'll do it."

The EPA recently set a guideline of 70 parts per trillion for PFOS and PFOA in drinking water supplies. PFOS is related to PFOA, or perfluorooctanoic acid, and has been linked to serious health problems in humans. It is used in firefighting foam, including the type used at the Stewart Air National Guard Base in Newburgh.

The state is funding a filter that will remove the chemical from the city's water supply while its exact source is determined. The state Department of Environmental Conservation could designate the area a Superfund site, depending on the outcome of the investigation.

A spokesman for the state health department has said the Cuomo administration is “working to find solutions that provide the tools the community needs to better understand possible exposure to PFOS.”

Medical professionals who study toxic chemicals say blood tests are an important tool to monitor patient health. The chemicals have been linked to a number of health problems, including cancer, thyroid problems and high cholesterol. Depending on the level of exposure, it can take the body years to flush the chemicals out of its system.

In Hoosick Falls, blood tests have found hundreds of residents with elevated levels of PFOA, some at more than 500 times the national average.

A congressional committee has begun an investigation of the way the Cuomo administration and the EPA handled the Hoosick Falls crisis, referring to the response as “sluggish.” The probe could be a prelude to federal hearings.

State Senate Republicans are planning to hold hearings later this month in Hoosick Falls, while Democrat-controlled Assembly plans to hold water quality hearings related to Hoosick Falls in September.

On Wednesday, Cuomo also repeated his claims that his administration was aggressive in its response to Hoosick Falls, despite evidence the state health department aggressively pushed back on federal regulators who wanted to sound an alarm about the municipal water pollution.

“I think the EPA has questions to answer,” he said. “I think the state has done an extraordinary job. I wonder where the press was.”

TWC

Thursday, August 4, 2016

Cuomo: State Did Extraordinary Job in Responding to Hoosick Falls Water Crisis

By Nick Reisman

Wednesday, August 3, 2016 at 02:25 PM EDT

While federal regulators will be on the hot seat, Gov. Andrew Cuomo on Wednesday reiterated his administration had done “an extraordinary job” in responding to the Hoosick Falls water contamination.

At the same time, Cuomo dinged the press for being a “day late and a dollar short” on the PFOA contamination of the village’s water supply. Emails have shown federal regulators, too, sought to warn the Cuomo administration over high levels of the chemical in the water last year.

The high levels of the chemical found in the drinking water in the rural village was reported earlier this year, and the state later declared the area a Superfund site to begin remediation.

A Republican-led congressional oversight committee has announced plans to review the response to the contamination in the village. Cuomo, however, insists he's not sweating the investigation, suggesting the Environmental Protection Agency did not exercise proper oversight in the first place through shifting limits on PFOA in water.

"I think the EPA has some questions to answer," Cuomo said. "I think the state has done an extraordinary job."

Asked if he was worried about what Congress may be find out about the state's response, Cuomo only repeated "I think the state has done an extraordinary job. I wonder where the press was."

Post Star

Gillibrand urges EPA to investigate PFOA

MAURY THOMPSON

13 hrs ago

GLENS FALLS — The federal Environmental Protection Agency should prioritize PFOA under a newly enacted law that establishes a process for banning toxic chemicals, said U.S. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y.

"I've already written a letter saying, 'Please investigate PFOA as your first chemical,'" she said Wednesday in a meeting with The Post-Star editorial board.

PFOA, or perfluorooctanoic acid, is the potentially cancer-causing chemical that contaminated the municipal drinking water supply in the village of Hoosick Falls, the town of Petersburg and has also been found in five private wells in North Bennington, Vermont.

Gillibrand held a public hearing on PFOA in Hoosick Falls in July.

"That's one of the things I can do as a federal representative," she said Wednesday. "Even though this might be a state issue, I can create a platform for people to be heard very easily."

She said the state should force manufacturers that used PFOAs, either through lawsuits or negotiations, to pay into a fund for medical monitoring of health effects on people that have been exposed to PFOA.

"We are going to need any family that has been exposed to PFOA to begin to go to a specific medical monitoring site where you begin to develop doctors of expertise," she said.

“That’s the payment they (manufacturers) should pay because we don’t know what a 200 blood level on a child means,” she said. “We don’t know if that kid is going to be more receptive to cancer at the age of 10, at the age of 20, at the age of 30. You need to monitor them through their lives so when they do get some health effect it is not misdiagnosed.”

Tests have shown PFOA to cause cancer in animals, but not necessarily in humans, according to the American Cancer Society.

PFOA, at one point, was an ingredient in polytetrafluorethylene, a chemical known as PTFE, commonly known as Teflon, which is used to coat threads, fabrics and cookware to resist sticking.

PFOA was discontinued as an ingredient in PTFE more than a decade ago when chemical manufacturers developed a replacement ingredient.

Gillibrand said there has been insufficient research about health effects of replacement ingredients.

“Companies that were producing PFOA have voluntarily stopped producing it. But they are producing cousins and sisters and brothers of the same chemical,” she said. “They’re still producing similar chemicals that we don’t have evidence about whether it is safe or not.”

If the EPA does investigate PFOA, it would be a long process, but it would provide certainty, Gillibrand said.

“Now it’s a long process. It takes years to go through all the hoops you need to go through,” she said. “If it’s a cancer-causer, let’s at least know the cause-effect risk levels.”

Gillibrand said workers in manufacturing plants that use PFOA or similar chemicals need accurate information about potential health risks.

“That’s an individual’s decision (whether to work in the industry), but that’s a decision you should make on facts. Not doing the research is not fair,” she said.

Bucks County Courier Times

Horsham criticizes water contamination cleanup in series of letters

By Kyle Bagenstose, staff writer

14 hrs ago

“Increasingly frustrated,” “difficult to work with,” and “unacceptable.”

These are just a selection of phrases from a series of seven strongly worded letters Horsham officials sent to various government agencies last week, expressing the township's objections to how ongoing water contamination in the area is being handled.

The letters, dated July 28 and obtained by this news organization, were sent to officials of the Air Force, Navy and National Guard Bureau, as well as the federal Environmental Protection Agency, the state Department of Environmental Protection, and the office of Gov. Tom Wolf.

At issue is the contamination of local water supplies by unregulated chemicals perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS). The presence of the chemicals in drinking water forced the shuttering of approximately 16 public and 150 private drinking water wells in Horsham, Warminster and Warrington in the past two years. As many as 70,000 people might have been exposed to the likely toxic chemicals in their drinking water.

The chemicals are suspected to have originated in firefighting foams used at the former Naval Air Warfare Center Warminster, the former Willow Grove Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base, and the active Horsham Air Guard Station.

The Horsham Township letters, also signed by officials of the Horsham Water and Sewer Authority and the Horsham Land Redevelopment Authority, criticize the military for the slow speed of some cleanup operations. It also characterizes oversight and communications from the EPA and DEP as being disorganized and inconsistent.

A bulk of the criticism is levied at the National Guard Bureau, a branch of the Air Force that operates the Horsham Air Guard Station. As previously reported, well sampling conducted by the military in 2015 suggested that contaminated water emanating from the guard station was polluting nearby Park Creek through a series of unnamed tributaries on the base. But nothing was done until recently.

Polluted water was also being discharged into Park Creek from a nearby Horsham Water and Sewer Authority treatment plant, because the facility was processing contaminated water from the guard station's sewer systems, but didn't have equipment in place that could filter out the chemicals.

While a temporary filtration system was installed at the guard station last month to remove the chemicals from its water supply, Horsham stated in its letters that surface waters coming from the base are still polluting Park Creek and downstream waterways.

"Stormwater discharged from the (guard station) to the tributary of Park Creek flows to the Little Neshaminy Creek, affects downstream neighbors, and also affects public water suppliers who draw from the Neshaminy Creek. This is unacceptable," the letters noted.

This problem is also the focus of an emergency order issued by the EPA to the Air Guard Station on July 12, a copy of which was obtained by this news organization.

The order noted that water samples taken from a stormwater basin on the northern portion of the guard station showed PFOA and PFOS levels reached as high as 4.61 parts per billion (ppb) in the basin. That level is more than 66 times the EPA's recommended limit for drinking water.

The EPA stated that by draining into Park Creek, the stormwater basin "may contribute to

high levels of these contaminants in numerous private water wells in the vicinity of the Little Neshaminy Creek.”

The EPA ordered the guard station to sample private drinking water wells in the vicinity of the Little Neshaminy Creek east of Street Road by mid-September, and also produce a cleanup plan to “control PFOS and PFOA in the stormwater discharging from the (guard station) to a tributary of Park Creek.”

In its letter to the Air Force, Horsham officials lambasted the cleanup timeline, stating that if a proposal isn't submitted until September, they believe the actual cleanup wouldn't begin taking place until mid-2017.

“The timetable by EPA is insufficient to handle a problem of this magnitude,” the Horsham letter stated. “This timetable may be the norm for the federal government, but it is not acceptable, considering the pervasive nature of the PFOS/PFOA contamination.”

Further, Horsham officials stated they believe the Air Guard Station is dragging its feet on cleanup operations.

“We have grown increasingly frustrated with the unacceptably deliberate pace of the (guard station) surface water remediation efforts,” the letter stated. “Our perception is that the (guard station) is seeking to place blame for the contamination on the Navy instead of working cooperatively and aggressively to remediate the issue.”

Horsham officials requested the National Guard Bureau work with the Navy and EPA to develop a cleanup plan that can be implemented by the end of the year. Barring that, Horsham requested that “measures must be taken to isolate the contaminated surface water and prevent it from leaving the property owned by the federal government.”

While Horsham's harshest words were reserved for the National Guard Bureau, officials also chastised the Air Force for not taking a more active role in pushing the Guard Bureau into action.

“As the branch of the United States military responsible for this federally-owned property, we believe that you must become an active participant in the remediation efforts,” the letters stated. “The (guard bureau) has acted only after the issuance of EPA orders. We would like to see that change.”

In its letters, Horsham was also critical of the EPA and the Pennsylvania DEP. The letters stated that the EPA's use of two oversight departments — the Region 3 Hazardous Site Clean-up Division for NASJRB and the Region 3 Water Protection Division for the guard station — has led to a lack of coordination.

“Efforts could be better coordinated if the EPA did not have two different officials directing its efforts ... going forward there must be one point of contact authorized to act on EPA's behalf to increase the speed of decision-making,” the letter stated.

Further, the letter stated that while the Navy has been “very forthcoming” with sharing information with Horsham, the guard bureau “does not freely share information, and the EPA does not seem to consistently include local entities in the distribution of its

correspondence.”

Similar criticisms were leveled in letters to the DEP’s regional and central offices. Horsham officials stated that while the DEP’s Southeast Regional Office Environmental Cleanup Group has “consistently participated” in meetings and communications, the office’s Safe Drinking Water Group and Clean Water Group have been involved infrequently.

“We believe the overall matter of (PFOA and PFOS) necessitates coordinated effort and participation from all three DEP program areas, which thus far has been significantly lacking,” the letter states.

A letter expressing the township’s concerns with the DEP was also sent to the the governor's office.

This news organization reached out to the Navy, Air Force, National Guard Bureau, EPA and DEP for comment mid-day Wednesday. Responses were not received by press time.

Bonnie Smith, press officer with the EPA, said the agency intends to provide answers to our questions within the next several days.

RI Public Radio

Cumberland Investigates Source Of PFOA In Drinking Water

By AMBAR ESPINOZA • AUG 3, 2016

Cumberland, Rhode Island is still investigating how the chemical PFOA made it into one of its drinking water systems.

Ambar Espinoza / RIPR

Cumberland, Rhode Island popped up on a list of cities and towns that have unsafe levels of the chemical perfluorooctanoic acid, or PFOA. It’s used to make Teflon. It turns out those levels have dropped significantly in the town over the past year.

Now they're within a safe threshold.

And that's good news. The toxic chemical is linked to cancer, thyroid diseases and complications during pregnancy. Rhode Island Public Radio environmental reporter Ambar Espinoza has more on what we know and don't know about how this chemical got into Cumberland's drinking water.

Every few years, the Environmental Protection Agency asks public water systems across the country to test their drinking water supplies for 30 unregulated chemicals.

"It's part of EPA's process to try to figure out what ought to be regulated in drinking water in the future," said June Swallow, chief of the Center for Drinking Water Quality at the Rhode

Island Department of Health. "And that consists of evaluating health risks of a contaminant and also evaluating whether that contaminant occurs in drinking water at levels of concern in the country."

Last year, in the most recent round of testing in Rhode Island, the chemical PFOA showed up in one water sample from the Cumberland Water Department, which serves more than 22,500 people.

At that time, the EPA's health advisory limit for PFOA was 400 parts per trillion. Cumberland's water sample detected PFOA at 81 ppt.

But, the health department still asked Cumberland to monitor that particular water system by sampling it every quarter, even though as far as both offices knew at the time, the levels fell well below the advisory level. Water Superintendent Chris Champi agreed to the quarterly sampling.

"We wanted to take a proactive approach to see a) what the source of PFOA was in the water and b) create a baseline for what the actual level is in the water," said Champi.

Fast forward to this May. The EPA revised its advisory level from 400 ppt down to 70 ppt. That's a steep drop, and put Cumberland on the list of towns that exceeded the threshold - barely.

The PFOA levels have dropped since then. They're down to the low 20s. (The first quarterly results detected PFOA at 24 ppt and 25 ppt; the second quarterly results at 21 ppt and 22 ppt.) Those are levels considered unsafe by state standards in Vermont, but well below the new EPA standard.

But where the PFOA is coming from is still a mystery. Champi's team had done repairs on that well system about a week or so before drawing water samples for the EPA survey. They used plumber's tape, also known as Teflon pipe tape. He said that could have contributed to the problem.

"However, we didn't have hits at our other well sites which go through a very similar procedure to what happened at that site during regular maintenance, so I would discount that as being a source [of PFOA]."

Cumberland Water Superintendent Christopher Champi holds a section of a pipe wrapped in plumber's tape, also known as Teflon pipe tape. It's a thin stretchy film used to seal pipes. Champi's team used it when they were doing repairs at one of their wells, where PFOA, a chemical used to make Teflon, was detected.

Credit Ambar Espinoza / RIPR

So, what could the source be? In Merrimack, New Hampshire, high PFOA levels were traced to nearby factories that have made products with the chemical and to contamination from landfills. Champi said there aren't any similar industries or landfills near the well, but is looking into whether fire departments have put out fires with a foam that has PFOA.

"We're lucky with that [water] source because it only supplies about 9.5 percent of the

water for our total system,” said Champi. “And as it enters the distribution system it's immediately blended with other water from other sources which all were absent for PFOA.”

Champi's right. Cumberland is lucky. Several communities in New York, Vermont and New Hampshire have had to switch to bottled water because PFOA has contaminated their drinking supply.

Johnathan Berard, the Rhode Island director of Clean Water Action, is pleased the health and Cumberland water departments took steps to be proactive about this issue by initiating quarterly sampling and publishing its results in the Consumer Confidence Report mailed out to residents this year.

“It's also refreshing to see a government agency doing the right thing, you know and acting in the best interest of their customers and of Cumberland residents,” said Berard.

The Cumberland Water Department will continue to monitor that well. Should PFOA levels go up again, the water superintendent says they'll look into treatment options to remove PFOA or take that well out of service until they figure out the source of the problem.

This report comes from the New England News Collaborative. Eight public media companies coming together to tell the story of a changing region, with support from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

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